RADCLIFFE MANOR:
A MEDIEVAL TOWER IN CONTEXT

GREATER MANCHESTER'S PAST REVEALED
16.
LOCATION OF RADCLIFFE MANOR

Radcliffe Regional Location

Scheduled Monument site
FOREWORD

The rapid industrialisation and urbanisation of Greater Manchester in the 19th century led to the decline, abandonment and demolition of many of the area’s great halls and mansions. This process is epitomised at Radcliffe Tower, which once formed part of a large manorial complex associated with one of Lancashire’s most important families during the medieval period. Rescued from obscurity and decay, the story of Radcliffe Tower’s re-emergence as a treasured heritage asset has been inspirational.

Painstaking historical research and archaeological investigation has allowed us for the first time to understand and present the heritage of this nationally significant site in a coherent way. Particularly impressive has been the way in which hundreds of adult volunteers and school children from the local community and beyond have helped a small team of professionals uncover and record the site’s archaeology.

This booklet sets out our current understanding of the Racliffe Tower structure and its associated buried remains. It also places the Tower in context, by describing the wider history of Radcliffe and its key historic buildings.

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Since the Industrial Revolution the town of Radcliffe has been centred on its bridge across the River Irwell. However, the original historic core of Radcliffe lies c. 1.5km to the east of that point within a great bend of the river. Here lie the remains of Radcliffe Tower, one of the oldest structures in Greater Manchester, and the medieval church of St Mary and St Bartholomew.
Radcliffe is mentioned in the Domesday Book which described it as a Royal Saxon manor. After the Norman Conquest in 1066 this land became the seat of a wealthy and powerful family who took the name ‘de Redclyffe’ from the nearby river cliff, where there is an exposed area of red sandstone rock. The family built a manorial hall, pele tower and church. Today, St Mary & St Bartholomew’s church and the ruins of the tower are the only visible remains of the medieval Radcliffe Manor.

The site of the hall and tower attracted the interest of local historians in the late 18th and 19th centuries, whilst a local campaign to save the ruined tower in the mid-20th century led to it being acquired by Bury Council. This was when the first excavations within and around the tower took place, led by the Bury Archaeological Group. In 2012 Radcliffe Hall was chosen as one of the sites to be investigated by archaeologists from the University of Salford as part of a region-wide community project called ‘Dig Greater Manchester’. This project was funded by the Association of Greater Manchester Authorities and Blackburn with Darwen Council.

The uncovering of workers’ housing and the remains of Tower Farm north of the ruins inspired a band of local volunteers and Bury Council to apply for further funding to investigate the medieval manor.
In 2013 the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) awarded a grant of £267,000 to the Radcliffe Heritage Project to learn more about and share knowledge of the site, through a partnership between Bury Council, the local community, the University of Salford and Bury College. This project was also designed to inform the interpretation and presentation of the remains and to consolidate the tower. Excavations in 2013 and 2014 revealed the foundations of the timber hall and 19th century workers’ housing along Tower Street. In 2015, Dig Greater Manchester returned to the site to investigate the hall more fully as part of the project’s follow-on research. This booklet is a summary of the results of the two projects and a record of the work of local volunteers and heritage professionals in their attempts to rediscover the archaeology and history of Radcliffe Tower.

The landscape around Radcliffe Tower is an ancient one. Sited in the middle reaches of the Irwell Valley, where the rivers Roch and Irwell meet, here the valley bottom widens to form a substantial low lying area, now containing a large loop of the River Irwell. Five kilometres to the north lies the Iron Age promontory settlement at Castletons, which overlooks the Irwell, whilst a few kilometres to the south lies the hilltop Roman farmstead at Rainsough. 1.5 kilometres to the north-west, behind Radcliffe Crematorium, there are also the remains of a late Neolithic hengiform monument. The wide valley bottom at Radcliffe attracted early activity, too. Gravel quarrying along the river bank to the south of the Tower at Radcliffe E’es during the late 1940s and early 1950s revealed prehistoric stone tools and timbers, as well as a wooden comb, possibly Roman. The line of the Roman road from the fort at Manchester to that at Ribchester crosses the Irwell just 280m to the west of the Tower. Croft Lane probably follows its northward course through Radcliffe. Saxon activity in the area is recorded by early place-names, Radcliffe itself being mentioned in the Domesday Survey of 1086. A fragment of a late medieval cross, which once stood on the corner of Eton Hill Road and Fletcher Street north of the Radcliffe Parish Church, has recently been rediscovered. This large stone slab, carved with a cross and edged with scallop decoration, is now on display at Radcliffe Library.
In the later medieval period Radcliffe Tower formed part of the manor of the de Radclyffes. This family was one of the most important landholders in medieval Lancashire owning large estates across much of south-eastern Lancashire, including lands in Alkrington, Astley, Bury, Chadderton, Culcheth, Langley, Little Lever, Ordsall, Pendlebury, Prestwich, Oswaldtwistle, Smithills and Tottington. The de Radclyffe family owned the manor from the 12th century to the 16th century and are recorded at Radcliffe as early as 1193.

In the 14th and 15th centuries the family were a significant power at the English court. Richard de Radclyffe (d. 1326) fought with Edward I and Edward II in the Scottish wars and was Seneschal (steward) to the King and minister of the King’s Forests of ‘Blackburnshire’. His grandson, also Richard, was Sheriff of Lancashire (d. 1375), and was described in 1358 as being ‘of Radcliffe Tower’. He obtained a licence for a private oratory (chapel) at Radcliffe in 1365. Sir James Radclyffe (d. 1410) fought with Henry IV at the battle of Shrewsbury in 1403 and it is probably his image that can be found on the tombstone in the church. Perhaps in recognition of his loyalty to the king Sir James was granted permission by Henry IV to fortify and rebuild his existing manor house in stone. This was given in a document called a ‘licence to crenellate’ and was dated 1403. Tradition states that this is when the ruined tower, that can still be seen today, was built although the recent archaeological work suggests that the tower and its hall are older. Sir James’ son Richard (d. 1442) fought at the battle of Agincourt in 1415 and was High Sheriff of Lancashire from 1421 to 1424. His grandson, John, died at the battle of Bosworth Field in 1485 fighting for the Lancastrians and the future Henry VII.

The manor remained in the hands of the de Radclyffe family until it passed to a distant relative, Robert Radclyffe, the First Earl of Sussex, in 1517. It was at this point that the hall ceased to be the chief home of the family. In 1561 the Third Earl of Sussex sold Radcliffe Tower and its manor to Richard Assheton of Middleton. It remained in the Assheton family, though not as their chief residence, until 1765 when the family estates were split between two daughters. The Radcliffe estate descended by marriage to the Wilton family (who lived at Heaton Hall in Manchester), with whom it remained until the mid-20th century.
The present ruined tower at Radcliffe is just a fragment of a much larger hall complex that was built by the de Radclyffe family in the later medieval period. Traditionally, the ruins are linked with the licence to crenellate, or fortify, the manor house issued on 15th August 1403 by Henry IV. Under its terms James was allowed to construct, in stone, a new hall and two towers, and to enclose the whole complex within an outer wall.

The recent archaeological work has failed to find any evidence for a second tower, nor for an enclosing wall. The issuing of a grant, of course, does not mean that all of the works listed were undertaken, nor does it mean that the old manor house was demolished and a new one built on the site. Indeed, the architectural style of the tower and its hall suggests a mid-14th century rather than 15th century date for the complex. So what was James doing with the grant? There are several possibilities. Firstly, James de Radclyffe may have used the grant merely to extend and embellish his existing manor house. Secondly, that he was using the grant to legalise a fortified house he had already built. Thirdly, that James died before the works were complete and that planned extensions were abandoned by his son.

Whatever the case, by the time the hall and its tower passed to a junior branch of the family in 1517 the manorial complex comprised several grand elements. Firstly, there was the three-storey stone-built pele tower. Internally, this measured 12.2m from north to south and by 5.5m from east to west. The south-western corner of the building projected slightly to accommodate a staircase built into the thickness of the wall and accessible only from the eastern end of the great hall. Around most of the external walls was a plinth c. 1.2m high. The ground floor of the tower contains the remains of three great fireplaces (two of which appear to be later inserts), marked by arches visible on the outside of the tower, suggesting that at one time this area served as a kitchen. A stone barrel vault once formed the ceiling of the ground floor, although this collapsed soon after 1842.
Above this on the first floor was a room with windows in the northern, western and southern elevations, and a fireplace in the eastern wall. Captain Roger Dewhurst sketched these three windows in 1781. He shows them as having decorative tracery but these elements have now disappeared. He also described the building as having had originally three stories, and there is archaeological evidence for this at the top of the eastern wall. Here, a slot for one of the two ceiling beams which supported the third floor and were mentioned by Whitaker in 1801 can still be seen. Thus, the tower may have been up to 13m high, although the highest portions of the walls in the early 21st century are now no more than c. 8.5m high.

The second element of the complex was the great hall. This abutted the tower to the west. It was a large timber-framed structure, the outline of the roof of which is preserved in the tower’s western elevation. This timber hall ended in a cross-wing at its eastern end. Early 19th century views suggest that the hall had a single storey but that its cross-wing was two storeys. Both are shown with closely-spaced upright timbers. Archaeological excavation has shown that
the timber hall stood on stone foundations whilst its cross-wing had a large inglenook-style fireplace in its western wall, which was a later insert. The only known internal view of the great hall was sketched by Thomas Whitaker in 1800 who also noted that it was 43 feet 2 inches long (12.95m) and in one place 26 feet wide (7.8m) but in another 28 feet wide (8.4m). These dimensions were broadly supported by the fragmentary stone foundations uncovered during the recent excavations.

Whitaker’s sketch and description of the hall interior shows a spere truss and a central truss across the body of the hall. These appear to have been independent of the walls, with a cambered tie-beam supported by heavy struts narrowing at the base, from which moulded braces rose to create a two-centred arch. Additional detailing on the spere truss shows the lower side panels had trefoil-cusped heads. This drawing also shows the exterior walls with large square panels formed by massive uprights on a timber sill with diagonal bracing. This form of structure can still be seen at the 14th century Baguley Hall in Manchester. The west wall of the great hall was formed by the stone of the Tower, and its fabric contains a number of features relating to the hall. These include the absence of the plinth which matches the width of the great hall, a central ground floor arched doorway leading into the Tower, with a draw bar slot, and a first floor doorway, originally with an arched lintel, at the southern end of the elevation. According to Whitaker’s sketch (see previous page) this was accessed by steps from within the eastern end of the great hall. The west wall of the tower also preserves parts of the shallow slot cut into the elevation and designed to take the end rafters of the hall roof. The shadow of the roofline on the western wall of the tower (see photo on page 25) shows that the apex of the roof of the great hall was c. 11.5m high.

Finally, to the west of the great hall was a further timber-framed wing running north-to-south. This western wing is shown on early illustrations and was partly uncovered during excavations by the Bury Archaeological Group in 1979-80 and again in the period 2012 to 2015 by the University of Salford. This wing was a jumble of
buildings. Two water colour paintings, several paintings show an L-shaped range of two storeys on stone foundations. There are two small timber link structures between the great hall and the west wing, each of different heights. The timber-framing of the west wing itself is formed by square panels with through rails suggesting a construction date in the 16th century, whilst the brick chimneys visible in some of the views of this western end of the hall might be later still.

By 1781 the timber hall was in use as a farmhouse and the stone tower a ruin. These remains were sketched by Captain Roger Dewhurst on a visit to the site in that year. A later visitor to the site, in 1800, was the local historian Thomas Whitaker, who sketched the interior of the great hall. By then the hall was being used as a hay barn. This suggests that only the western timber range was occupied in the early 19th century. G. Pickering produced his engraving showing the hall and tower in decay, with holes in the roof of the great hall and weeds and trees growth amongst the ruins of the tower.

The contemporary account of Samuel Bamford shows that the demolition of the hall and its western wing, which were replaced by the new Tower Farmhouse to the north and the building of the Tower Street houses, occurred between 1833 and 1840. By the 1880s the tower was in use as a farm building for Tower Farm and hemmed in to the north and west by workers’ housing.
A letter written on the 24th September 1888 by Richard Bealey and published in the Manchester Guardian on the 28th September 1888 on page seven, sheds some light on the fate of the great hall and tower. Bealey wrote that ‘Radcliffe Tower and the farm connected with it was leased to my mother, the late Mrs. Mary Bealey, and rented from her by the firm of which she was a member [Bealey’s & Company’s Bleachworks]. One of the conditions of the lease was that she should repair the farm buildings, and be at liberty in so doing to use materials of the Tower and the Old Hall connected with it. The Tower, she did not disturb, but she used the materials of the ‘Old Hall’. This building, such as it was, had long been used as cowhouses and store for hay and straw, and some rooms were used as cottages. Mrs. Bealey, on the site of the ‘hall’, and using some of the old materials, built a row of cottages [on Tower Street].’

Gravel quarrying south of the Tower began in the 1940s and the farmhouse and workers’ housing were demolished during the mid-1960s. According to a Mr J M Robinson, writing in the local paper in the 1960s, this left the Tower in the middle of a scene of ‘indescribable industrial degradation and squalor’. Bits of the ruin had been stolen or had fallen down due to neglect, and it seemed as though the tower was on the verge of being lost forever. However, in 1925 the national historical importance of the site was recognised when it was scheduled as an ancient monument by the Officer of Works and in the 1960s a campaign began to save the building. The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings sent an expert to look at the site in 1969 and negotiations were begun by the local council to buy the tower and save it for the future.

Radcliffe Tower and the land to the south had been purchased by a quarry company in the mid-20th century from the Wilton family. By 1964 it was owned by River Aggregates Ltd, later known as P D Pollution Control Ltd (Beatwaste). This company was taken over by Wimpey (Waste Division) in 1975 and the disused quarry was used for landfill. After many years of discussion Wimpey Waste Management Ltd transferred the Tower to Bury Council in 1988. Conservation work on the tower in the 1980s was designed to stabilise the structure and in the mid-1990s further work to repair the ruin led to the filling of two of the ground floor arches and the two windows in the eastern elevation. At this time the protected scheduled area was extended to the west to include the site of the hall. In 2007 Bury Council acquired the land around the tower, including the site of the hall and the houses on Church Row and Tower Street. With the closure of the landfill site, plans were begun to incorporate the Tower into Close Park.
The oldest building in Radcliffe is the parish church of St Mary and St Bartholomew. This lies roughly 100m to the east of Radcliffe Tower. The church is first mentioned in 1202 when William de Radclyffe held the right to appoint a priest, although as this was a confirmation of his right the church must have been here in the 12th century. William rebuilt the church but before this was completed his wife Cecilia Montbegon died. He then founded a chantry within the church in honour of her memory. The name of the earliest known rector is Robert who is mentioned in a document dating from around 1240. The church and the rector were supported by the patron of the church, the lord of the manor, the glebe lands and parish tithes. The income of the parish was too small to be included in the papal taxation of parishes taken in 1291. As late as 1650 the income of the church was only £50 a year, not much more than the income from a medium-sized Lancashire farm holding of the period. The right to appoint the priest came with the lordship of the manor and this right lasted until the early 20th century.

The oldest surviving part of the church structure is the chancel arch. The style suggests that this was built in the 13th century, perhaps as part of the works funded by William de Radclyffe. The arcades of the two-bay nave and the flowing tracery of the end windows in the southern transept, along with the cross-shaped plan, date from the 15th century and are in the gothic style known as ‘Decorated’. The flat roof of the nave with its four-light clerestory windows is later, for the outline of a steeper roof can still be seen above the chancel arch. The short western tower was rebuilt in 1665 by the then rector Charles Beswick, with patronage from three local families: the Asshetons, Beswicks and Radcliffes, perhaps after a long period of neglect. The Chester diocese was created in 1541 as part of the changes during the Reformation when England became a Protestant country. It was one of the poorest dioceses in England and, consequently, the maintenance of many of its parish churches were neglected for a century or more. The 19th century saw significant changes to the fabric of the church. The chancel was rebuilt in 1817 with monies from the Earl of Wilton and in 1846 the north transept rebuilt and the south porch removed. Further restorations and extensions took place in 1870 and 1905. This work included the rebuilding of the southern aisle, the re-flooring of the interior and the replacement of the cambered roof trusses of the nave with copies, in each case by the architects J Medland Taylor. This created the present almost square plan of the church, hemming in and hiding the older medieval features.
The interior of the church contains several medieval and post-medieval features of note. The most impressive is a fragile alabaster effigy of James de Radclyffe and his wife and three children. James is associated with the rebuilding of the nearby Tower and hall at the beginning of the 15th century. The stone is preserved beneath the altar. A 13th century piscina, or stone washing bowl, can still be seen in the southern transept chapel. Also in this part of the church is the oldest piece of stained glass in the building, which depicts a crowned head, reputed to be King Henry IV. The original square-faced clock, fitted in 1785, is now part of the pavement outside the vestry door. Although the church has undergone many alterations over the centuries, the latest being in 2013, it has maintained its medieval character and its historical importance is recognised by it being a Grade 1 listed building.

In the church porch is the Kemp Memorial stone with the Lancashire Fusiliers Regiment Roll of Honour, listing local soldiers who died from different regiments in both world wars of the 20th century. In the northern side of the churchyard, the timber lych gate is another war memorial, whilst nearby is a third memorial erected in 1922 as a thanks-offering for the safe return of men from the First World War. In the graveyard itself are six soldiers from the First World War and three soldiers from the Second World War, as well as graves of the local industrial family, the Bealeys.
On the western side of Tithebarn Street, roughly 150m west of the church, can be found a small, single-storey, sandstone building. Traditionally this is known as the Radcliffe Tithe Barn. Tithe barns were built to store produce from church lands, or taxed goods, in support of the priest and parish. This building is shown on a plan of 1765 and later in the 19th century on Ordnance Survey maps, but its origins are unknown and even the name seems to be a later addition. It was adapted for industrial purposes in the 19th century by the Bealey family, and was in use as a dye house in 1861. Around 1891 the newly paved road to the east was named after the structure, but whether the structure was originally built as the parish tithe barn is unclear.

Its size and construction style suggests that is was built as a general barn for the storage of produce and for housing a range of animals. The barn is a single storey stone building with a wide door in the eastern elevation and other smaller openings in the southern gable. The southern elevation has a recess which was used as a bee bole. The barn has composite walling materials and is constructed with an inner and outer leaf or skin, random rubble coursing being common to both skins. Two types of sandstone can be seen in the structure, red and yellow. The plain vernacular style and the use of local sandstone suggest that the barn was built in the 17th or early 18th century, after the hey-day of Radcliffe Manor.

One more piece of evidence is worth a mention. Some of the red sandstone structure includes a re-used upturned corbel and re-used massive square stones and quoins. These features can be found in the western elevation, and they are similar to the stonework seen in the nearby Tower. Perhaps parts of the barn were built from the ruins of Radcliffe Tower, or possibly spare stone from the rebuilding of the church tower in 1665.
The industrialisation of Radcliffe and the decline of the land around the hall are tied up with one family in the 18th and 19th centuries: the Bealeys. As their textile business boomed they became a philanthropic family, building a Wesleyan Methodist Chapel (1839), Infant School (1860), Convalescent Hospital (1903), houses for workers and contributed to a great many other good causes.

Tradition states that the Bealeys were ‘whisters’, or bleachers, in Radcliffe in 1732 but the earliest documentary evidence for the family in Radcliffe is a lease dated 26th May 1750. This lease granted land to William Bealey and his sons Richard and Joseph. It states that: ‘The first lease of their bleach-works dates from 1750, and it had been in their occupation previously’. The ancient method of bleaching cloth was quite a lengthy procedure. A heap of cloth would have been pounded, without soap, in the River Irwell with a washing bat known as a ‘beetle’ (similar to a cricket bat). The clean cloth was then pegged out on their crofts (the fields around their works and to the north and east of the Parish Church and the ruined Radcliffe Tower) and left to bleach naturally in the sun: this was known as ‘grassing’.

A regular and plentiful water supply was an important element of any bleach works. In order to secure this the family built a network of artificial channels, or leats, running from the northern bank of the River Irwell above a weir. The earliest of these appears to be Bealey’s Goit. This was built around 1760 to carry water from Bealey’s Weir, on the River Irwell one mile away, to Bealey’s bleachworks on Dumers Lane (where the Riverside Road estate now stands) and eventually back to the river. Water was stored at an intermediate reservoir now known as Swan Lodge. Joseph, having studied a new method of bleaching, established a chemical works in 1791 making ‘oil of vitriol’ (sulphuric acid) and the Bealeys became the first firm to supply chlorine for bleaching cloth.
To generate sufficient power for the eight water wheels of the early 19th century mill a further series of channels, reservoirs and culverts were built around the site. The surviving sections of the goit, some of which run through Close Park and past the church, are now fed only by surface water run-off. The original weir was re-built in 1811 and still survives, whilst a small hydro-electricity generating plant now makes use of the goit intake. The family’s works and property expanded, and by 1841 the Bealey’s controlled 230 acres to the north and north-east of the tower and church.
By 1837 the family had built three houses on an area known as The Close, to the north-east of the medieval church. Close House was the last to be built and by 1850 was the only one to remain standing. In 1925 the gardens were gifted to the town to be used as a public park, now known as Close Park, and the house as a child welfare centre. It was later used as a museum and an ambulance station, finally being demolished around 1969. Part of the house was excavated in 2012 when the substantial stone foundations of the front wall were uncovered. The only surviving structure associated with the house is the fountain near the child’s playground.
The industrial growth of Radcliffe was accompanied by the construction of houses for the local workforce. Thus, during the first half of the 19th century this type of housing grew up around the Bealeys’ factories turning the medieval core of the manor into an industrial village. Edwin Butterworth captured this industrialisation process in action, writing in 1833 that the ancient manor house of Radcliffe Tower was ‘nearly surrounded by the humble cottages of labouring artisans…’

This new industrial housing included houses to the west and north of the church along Bury Street, Norman Street, Rose Street, Sandford Street and an open area known as Church Green. Two rows lay closest to Radcliffe Tower on Church Row and Tower Street. The houses along the eastern side of Tower Street were built during the later 1830s by the Bealey family and were the subject of archaeological excavations in 2013 and 2015. A further row of seven houses was built to the north of the Tower on Church Street in the 1840s. These formed Church Row and like the houses on Tower Street, contained four rooms each and were entered directly from the street. They were excavated in 2012.

By the late 19th century Radcliffe was a diverse town and living in the streets close by the Tower during the 1890s and 1900s were Dutch, Irish, and Welsh families. However, the majority of the inhabitants of this growing cotton town were born in Lancashire and the census returns for Church Row show that all the inhabitants of the seven cottages were Lancashire-born. They also show that in the mid-19th century these houses were mostly occupied by calico printers, who were presumably employed at the neighbouring works operated by the Bealey family.
REDISCOVERING THE TOWER & HALL

The tower has been a prominent feature of this part of the Irwell valley for many centuries and was sketched and described by travellers and local antiquarians in the 18th and 19th centuries. The most important descriptions of the tower are by Captain Roger Dewhurst in the 1780s, Rev T. D. Whitaker in 1800, Edwin Butterworth in 1833, Edward Baines in 1836, Samuel Bamford in 1844, and the Rev. W Nicholls in 1910.

*Radcliffe Tower in 1875 used as farm outbuilding. The backs of Church Row houses are visible on the right (Bury Archives)*
The earliest written description of the tower and hall dates from 1784 and was penned by Captain Roger Dewhurst of Halliwell Hall, Bolton. He notes in his diary for September 6th 1784: ‘The walls of Radcliffe Tower are six feet thick. There is a groove in each arch as if intended for a portcullis, and over the north and south arches there is a hole about two feet square communicating from the arch to the window, and back again from the middle of the pole to the arch. The west side of the tower joins to the hall by a side door about two and a half feet wide. The ground floor is arched over with a very flat arch. The tower has been three storeys high’.

In 1800 Rev. T D Whitaker published his ‘A History of the Original parish of Whalley and the manor of Clitheroe’. This includes a description of the remains at Radcliffe, of which the greatest part is taken up with a detailed study of the timber hall. Of the tower he notes that ‘at the bottom of this room [the hall] is a door opening into one of the towers, the lower part of which only remains, of massy grout-work, and with three arches, each furnished with a funnel or aperture like a chimney…Near the top of the hall, on the right, are the remains of a doorway, opening into what was once a staircase, and leading to a large chamber above the kitchen, the approach to which beneath was by a door of massy oak, pointed at the top’.

Edwin Butterworth, writing in 1833, undertook much of the fieldwork for Edward Baines’ ‘History of the County Palatine and Duchy of Lancaster’. He described the tower as ‘…a massive pile of rough plain stones overgrown with shrubs and grass and tumbling into a confused heap of ruins on each of its four sides are four archways two of them made up and a third closed by a door of rotten oak which once led into the principal room – Above each archway was a funnel like a chimney and cut through the roof but they are now falling – On the summit of this heavy pile a sycamore tree is growing…’

Baines’ description of the tower and hall, published in 1836, is almost identical to some of the material written by Butterworth in 1833 and is clearly based directly upon Butterworth’s research, although more fanciful in its tone. Thus ‘Radcliffe Tower, now in ruins, was anciently one of the most considerable manorial residences in the county of Lancaster…The tower was built with stone strongly growted [sic], with a door communicating with the house. On the top of the tower beneath the castellated rampart, at a depth of about four feet, was a covering of lead, which has long since disappeared, and its place is now occupied by a sycamore tree, growing out of the ruins. Over the great entrance door of the tower, from each of the three stories, is a funnel resembling an ancient chimney, with which these manorial fortresses were furnished, in order that the domestic garrison might resist the entrance of an enemy by pouring upon him boiling pitch, or casting down offensive missiles….This ‘hall’ is now [1833] used as a hay-loft and cow-shed; nothing visible remains of the moulded cornice of oak, the massy principals, ornamented pillars, the pointed door-way, or the curious oak window-frame mentioned by the learned doctor [Whitaker]. The principal part of the edifice, which stands within a few yards of the church, near a cluster of cottages [Church Row?], is a neglected ruin, and the remains of what may be properly called the tower partake of the general dilapidation.
All the fabric, except the tower, is of brick, enclosed in squares of wood…” This is good evidence that the hall was standing in 1833.

In 1844 Samuel Bamford clearly states that the hall had been demolished a few years before. He noted that ‘the square tower, or fortified part of the ancient residence, still remains; but tottering with decay. The vaulted roof of the tower room almost hangs by a single stone, and unless it be protected from further wanton outrage it must soon share the fate of the hall…”
The context for the demolition of the hall was the need for ‘more dwellings….and the hall, under some contract or another, was pulled down to furnish materials for to build them’. Archaeological evidence from the excavations of 2013-15 has shown that the houses along the eastern side of Tower Street were built using material from the hall. Since these properties are shown on the 1848 Ordnance Survey map for the area it seems a safe assumption to suggest that these were the houses referred to by Bamford in 1844.

Reverend Nicholls’ work, published in 1910, brings together the text of the licence to crenellate from 1403, with the descriptions of Whitaker, Baines/Butterworth, and Bamford. He also includes some notes on the angry correspondence concerning the destruction of the hall between Samuel Bamford and a Mr T Heywood. This correspondence is especially useful as it provides a date for the destruction of the hall, which appeared to have occurred soon after 1833.
The final significant historic description is given by Alan Reed in his report written in March 1969 for the Society for The Protection of Ancient Buildings. His description provides a useful indication of the state of the monument in that year. ‘The Tower which runs roughly north to south is approximately 50 feet by 28 feet measured externally. The walls which have a massive base and plinth are about 5 feet in thickness…The basement was entered on the west side by an arched doorway approximately 4 feet wide with panels and arch in a continuous chamfer without base moulding. The unusual features of the building however, are the three large arched openings (approximately 10 feet span) each in the north, south and east walls. They are constructed with under and outer skins with a space about 2 feet 6 inches wide between them. The most obvious explanation to this is that they are fireplace openings and flues and there is some evidence of calcining in the stonework.

However, with only comparatively slight acquaintance with the building, I do not feel able to express a definite opinion without further investigation. The walls stand to various heights but average about 20 feet from the ground, the possibility of a third story can only be conjectural. The dating of the Tower presents some problems. It has an essentially defensive position on flat ground in a bend of the River Irwell. A licence to build and crenellate granted to James de Radcliffe in 1403 has generally been accepted as the date of this building. The plain, massive stonework does not assist in the task but its general character and detail of the base course and door opening suggests a possible date about 100 years earlier than this.’
The first archaeological excavations at Radcliffe were undertaken by Mr Shawcross in 1961 and later by the Bury Archaeological Group in 1979-80. Shawcross’ excavations were inside the north-eastern corner of the tower and provided the base of a medieval storage jar. The excavation of five trenches by the Bury Archaeological Group in 1979-80 immediately west of the Radcliffe Tower revealed the remains of a timber-framed wing and a stone wall and a possible ditch. Further detailed recording of the ruins was made in 1995 as part of Bury Council’s conservation of the structure. In 2007 three evaluation trenches were excavated along the quarry haulage road which crossed the site of the medieval hall by Oxford Archaeology North. It uncovered medieval and post-medieval remains associated with the hall, in the form of cobbled surfaces, a hearth, stone and clay foundations from the hall, and a stone culvert all at a depth of c. 1 metre.

The small-scale nature of these trenches meant that it was difficult to come up with a coherent chronology for the site. This changed with the detailed investigation of the ruined tower, its hall and the surrounding landscape undertaken between 2012 and 2015. This was led by archaeologists from the Centre for Applied Archaeology at the University of Salford. Part of this work was funded through a Heritage Lottery grant to the Radcliffe Heritage Project and supported by Bury Council. The rest of the work was undertaken as part as the Dig Greater Manchester community archaeology project, funded by AGMA.
The trenches opened in 2012 to 2015 were designed to look at the whole history of the site, from the foundation of the tower and subsequent ruin of the hall, to its use as a farm, the encroachment of industry and its rediscovery as a ruin. These investigations included trenches within the tower and three area excavations over the medieval hall west of the tower, and the Church Row and Tower Street workers’ housing.

*The walls of the Tower, showing how it has been modified over the years*’ (Salford University)
One of the surprising discoveries of the dig was that the tower and hall had been built on a shallow hillside. The pre-industrial ground surface dropped by over 2m from Church Street, in the north, to the area south-west of the hall. One consequence of this was that although later activity had destroyed some of the medieval foundations, it also buried other parts of the site. Worst affected were the remains of the 14th and 15th century great hall.
The building of barns and a farmyard had removed most of the medieval and post-medieval floor surfaces. What was left were bits of the stone foundations on which the wooden walls of the hall stood, and larger structures such as a later, 16th or 17th century, inglenook fireplace inserted into the western end of the hall. In contrast the building of the quarry access road in the mid-20th century buried some of the earlier floor levels close to the western wall of the tower.

The remains of the western wing of Radcliffe Hall were better preserved because of the fall in the land towards the river and the 19th century earth moving in this area. The houses along Tower Street were built on the stone foundations of this western wing, whilst the link buildings between the hall and the wing were buried to a depth of nearly 2m. This area preserved the best evidence for medieval archaeology on the site, with a complex sequence of stone floors and drains being built and demolished in rapid succession. This area had been used as a rubbish dump during the 16th century and some of the best finds from the site came from this area, sealed by the final 17th century rebuilding.

The remains of the 18th to mid-20th century farmstead were located to the north of the tower, which itself had been re-used as a farm building in the 19th and early 20th centuries.
The earliest of these buildings was a large rectangular barn built on the southern side of Church Street. Excavation showed that this structure had a number of phases, the earliest one of which was represented by large stone foundations and an inner floor of stone cobbles. This building may be 17th century in origin, and is shown on a map from the mid-18th century. The south-eastern corner of this earliest barn was excavated by the Bury Archaeology Group in 1979-80, and the 2012-15 excavations showed that the barn had been built over an earlier, probably medieval, sunken routeway. In the early 19th century, probably when the hall was demolished, a new brick farmhouse was built at the eastern end of the stone barn. Later in the 19th century the farm expanded around the ruined tower which was surrounded by a cobbled farmyard. A rectangular brick structure was located immediately north of the tower. This appears to have been a four-roomed stable block, built in the mid-19th century.

West of the hall a large open-sided hay barn was built over the site of the hall around 1902. The construction of this barn, which had steel legs sitting on brick plinths and a barrel-shaped steel roof, led to the levelling of the area over the hall and the loss of some of the earlier archaeology through the removal of medieval and post-medieval floor levels. This may also have been the moment at which ceramic land drains were dug across the site, further truncating some of the medieval archaeology. However, as the whole site sits on a gentle slope this landscaping also led to the dumping of soils down the hill and the preservation of the western wing of the hall.

By the 1920s another open-sided barn had been built east of the Tower. Excavation of its brick foundations indicated that a lot of gravel had been excavated between the tower and the graveyard, removing any trace of earlier archaeology. All of these farm buildings were demolished in the 1960s.
Excavation of Tower Row (see page 19) showed that though built in brick, the foundations used stone rubble from the demolition of the hall and part of the tower. This rubble included architectural fragments such as ashlar stonework and fragments of moulding. Each property had four rooms, two on the ground floor and two on the upper floor. Although the remains of the housing now lie partly below the modern street, the excavation was able to reveal the rear rooms and yards. At the end of the 19th century the back yards were extended to the east and a set of privies, housing tipper toilets, added to each property.

Excavation of Church Row revealed the brick foundations and flagged floors of these houses and their rear yards and privies, which appear to have been built at the same time. These houses were amongst the better-quality of workers’ housing in the mid-19th century, their plan-form being reminiscent of labourers’ rural cottages. The provision of outside toilets for each house was in marked contrast to their city centre counterparts, which often had communal toilet blocks. Like the farm both rows of housing were demolished in the 1960s.
One of the ways in which archaeologists interpret the past is through the examination of objects such as bone, glass, metal, pottery, and stone. These types of finds can tell us about how past societies adapted their landscape, exploited the local resources, expressed wealth and status, ate, fought, slept, and died.

The excavations at Radcliffe Tower have produced a large grouping of such finds, spanning the 14th century to the 20th century. Amongst hundreds of excavated objects, the largest groups by date came from the medieval and early post-medieval periods, covering the life of the hall from the 14th century to 16th century and the 19th and early 20th centuries when the workers’ housing was built and occupied on Tower Street and Church Row. Most of the earlier pottery came from the western end of the great hall, where the site of the later link buildings between the hall and the western wing appear to have been used as a rubbish dump during the 16th century. Most of the later pottery came from the rear yards of the workers’ housing. The size and range of this material makes it regionally important for interpreting how life in such a manorial hall evolved over these centuries.

More than a hundred sherds of pottery from the medieval period were excavated from the hall site. The earliest sherds at Radcliffe tower were green-glazed ware pots from the 13th to 14th century. These included jugs or beakers in an oxidised pink fabric with green glaze applied externally in a haphazard style. There were also sherds of unglazed earthenware types from the 14th and 15th centuries, some of these similar to the large storage jar excavated by Mr Shawcross in 1961 from within the tower. The site of the great hall produced a fragment of glazed floor tile and more than a dozen 14th or 15th century green-glazed ridge tiles. These were in two styles which appeared to be of different periods rather than merely different fashions, but both made from a coarse gritty fabric splashed with green glaze. Such tiles would have been made locally by itinerant craftsmen, as they were too fragile to travel any distance. Slabs of flattened clay would have been laid over an A-shaped wooden mould and pressed into the required shape and the decoration added before they were allowed to air-dry. The tiles were then glazed before being fired in a small kiln. Similar ridge tiles have been excavated at Norton Priory and Timperley Old Hall, and the absence of flat clay tiles at Radcliffe may indicate that the medieval hall was thatched, apart from the ridge. The location of a kiln that might have supplied Radcliffe remains unknown.

The Shawcross storage jar (Bury Museum)

Fragments of 14th century roof tiles, probably from the manor house (Salford University)
From the late 15th century onwards, new developments in kiln technology and fashion led to an increasingly regionalised pattern of pottery production with new types of ware being manufactured over much of England and a more regionalised market. Amongst the new types was Cistercian ware, made in the north Midlands and characterised by shades of a fine red fabric and dark brown iron glaze. Several dozen examples were excavated from the hall at Radcliffe. These included single and double handled drinking pots and storage jars. Many sherds were found in the rubbish deposits at the western end of the great hall. There were also several sherds of Midland Purple ware (vessels fired almost to the point of fusion giving them a purple sheen to the surface) from the 16th century, fragments of a glass goblet and an Elizabethan halfpenny. These were all found at the western end of the hall.

Few medieval kilns have been excavated in North West England, and none from Greater Manchester, although there is a 13th century reference to a pottery kiln at Wigan. It is therefore unclear where much of this material was manufactured. It is likely that this pottery would have been made locally, and some of the fabrics are reminiscent of material found in the kilns from the Rainford area in south-west Lancashire.

Pottery from the 17th and 18th centuries was found in make-up and levelling layers north of the hall in the area of the farmyard. These included fragments of utilitarian kitchen wares and a few fragments of more expensive table wares. The 17th century material included lead-glazed dark earthen pottery known as blackwares. These represented a more advanced form of production making the transition from medieval to modern pottery manufacturing. Other wares from this period included fragments of slip-coated wares characterised by a brown or dark red slip beneath a lead glaze, and trailed slipware dishes with feathered, jewelled and trailed decoration.
Slipware pottery was created by painting or splashing powdered clay mixed with water, known as a slip, onto vessels before firing. The examples from Radcliffe were probably made in ceramic production areas such as North-East Wales, Staffordshire or Yorkshire. There were also, for the first time, the remains of clay pipes, mostly stems but also a few pipe bowls.

The building of the two rows of workers’ housing in the 1830s and early 1840s marks a change to industrialized forms of pottery wares. Most of this material was found in either rubbish pits or levelling layers in the backyards of these properties. The fragments included clay pipe stems and bowls, many sherds from buff-coloured earthenware storage jars, iron glazed blackwares, stone wares and a large number of blue-transfer-print cream wares (bowls, cups, plates and teapots).

Other finds from this period included metal forks and knives, a thimble, floor tiles, stamped bricks, slate roof tiles, a bakelite fitting, and a variety of glass bottle types, such as wide-mouthed milk bottles, brown medicine jars and a torpedo-shaped soda water bottle.

Perhaps the most evocative of the post-medieval objects uncovered by the digs was the Radcliffe token, excavated in the rear yard of No. 20 Church Row. This is a typical example of a Children of Mary medallion. The obverse side of the medallion shows an image of the Blessed Virgin Mary with ‘rays of grace’ that emanate from the rings she wares. A motto ‘monstra te esse matrem’ (show thyself a mother), can be seen around the edge and is a phrase taken from the 9th century devotional hymn ‘Ave Maris Stella’ (Hail, Star of the Sea).

The reverse shows the Ave Maria monogram with lilies and a star above. The inscription ‘Congregation of the Children of Mary’ runs around the edge, and there is a panel for the member’s name. Sadly the Radcliffe name panel was blank – perhaps it had been worn away? Who, then, was the owner of the medallion? It might be one of the Morgan family recorded living at No. 2 in the 1891 and 1901 censuses, but we can’t be sure. This object was certainly a highly personal item for a young adult, probably a girl, living at the end of the 19th century. Such a personal religious item is a highly unusual discovery from houses of this period in the Manchester region, and how it came to be lost or thrown away in the backyard is unknown. Archaeology can only take us so far in revealing the history of an object, even one from the recent past.
Traditionally, it has been assumed that Radcliffe Tower and its hall were built around 1403, the date of the licence. However, there are several documentary references which show that there was a hall and indeed a tower at Radcliffe before this date. Firstly, the grant of 1403 suggests this by using the word ‘rebuild’. Secondly, Richard de Radclyffe was described in 1358 as being ‘of Radcliffe Tower’. Finally, the description of the Banastre rebellion, an uprising in Lancashire against the Earl of Lancaster and his supporters in 1315, implies an attack on the home of the de Radcliffe family, supporters of the earl. Adam de Radcliffe was captured at the nearby parsonage by the rebels on 8th October 1315.

It has been suggested that the tower, which has three arched fireplaces, was merely the kitchen wing of the hall built in stone to prevent it from burning down. Yet, several architectural features show that Radcliffe Tower was built as a pele tower in the 14th century. The internal doors, both with draw bar slots, the small narrow windows at ground-floor level, the lack of any connection between the ground and first floor, and the stair tower with external access from the first floor all provide evidence of the tower’s defensive qualities. Effectively such a tower represented a defended wing to what was otherwise a typical medieval manorial hall arrangement in this area. Whether it had a crenellated parapet when it was first constructed is unclear. The upper part of the tower has long since collapsed or been demolished, but in any case there are examples in the North West of pele towers without crenallations, as at Thistlewood, Ubarrow Hall and Yanworth Hall near Appleby which are all close in style to the primary phase of Radcliffe.

The unusual arrangement of the hall and tower end as shown on the 1800 engraving accompanying Whitaker’s account also suggests that its primary use was not domestic and that such adaptation was later. The hall, based on Whitaker’s account, measured 13.09m long and c 8.19m wide. This makes the hall relatively large in size. The hall at Smithills Hall, Bolton, built c 1406 measures only 11.07m long, although is 9.36m wide. The 1800 engraving (see page 9) shows a spere truss at the eastern end of the hall, which suggests that a screens passage existed at this end of the hall, with the western end representing the upper end of the hall. This image places the tower at the lower end of the hall, which is an area usually associated with a service function. A traditional hall arrangement would have three doorways in the lower end wall of the hall, one leading to a buttery, another to a pantry and the other to a kitchen. In this case the western wall of the tower represents the eastern end wall of the hall, although there is only a single centrally placed door, leading into the ground floor of the tower. This is clearly not a typical arrangement, although it is possible that it represents a variation of the traditional three door layout. The problem remains of where the buttery and pantry were located. However, Whitaker’s engraving may provide a possible clue to the position of these two rooms.
The engraving shows the spere truss a considerable distance up the hall from the tower wall and, accepting that the perspective of the engraving is not accurate, there is nevertheless the suggestion that the area between the spere and the end wall was wider than the usual screens passage; (the screens passage at Smithills Hall is 1.7m wide and that at Baguley Hall, Manchester, a 14th-century building, 2.25m wide). If this was the case, it is possible that the buttery and pantry were accommodated against the west wall of the tower separated by a short passageway leading into the ground-floor of the tower which could have been used as a kitchen. There are plenty of parallels in northern Lancashire and Cumbria for pele towers which are incorporated into buildings containing medieval halls (Ashton, Halton, Levens, Sizergh, and Thurnham for instance) all of which would have started life as isolated structures. The archaeological and architectural evidence suggests that Radcliffe belonged to the late medieval tradition of defensive manorial sites common across the border counties of Cumbria and Northumberland, and in the hinterland counties such as northern Yorkshire and Lancashire.

The context for the initial construction of the tower sometime in the 14th century is probably the warfare between England and Scotland during this period. After the battle of Bannockburn in 1314 England was not strong enough to conquer Scotland. Yet neither was Scotland strong enough to retrieve those northern English counties that it had held in the 12th century: Cumberland, Northumberland, and Westmorland, plus the Honours of Lancaster and Skipton. The result of this military stalemate was a century of raiding into southern Scotland and northern England by both monarchies, followed by two centuries of low-level border conflict in the 15th and 16th centuries by local families (the border reevers). The late 1310s and 1320s saw raiding as far south as West Yorkshire and southern Lancashire by the Scots so the need for a strong defensive structure at manor level became common. Without exception the tower houses of Lancashire and Cumbria post-date 1320 and a significant number were built in the later 14th century.

As the wealth of the Radclyffe family grew, so did their manor house. By the early 16th century Radcliffe Tower had become one of the great medieval manor houses of northern England. There are several surviving examples in the Manchester region, such as Bramall Hall, Smithills Hall and Wythenshawe Hall. These sites also include Ordsall Hall, once owned by the de Radclyffes of the Tower, and later owned by a branch of the family. These large houses, set around a courtyard, had many specialised rooms, from the great hall to a solar and private chapel, as well as private apartments for the family, servants’ quarters and associated farm buildings. The archaeological and historical research of the early 21st century at Radcliffe has revealed how grand the hall and its tower once were and that Edwin Butterworth’s ‘massive pile of rough plain stones overgrown with shrubs and grass’ is in fact the remains of the house of one of the most powerful families in late medieval and early Tudor northern England.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6000 BC</td>
<td>Prehistoric (paleolithic/mesolithic) settlement established on Radcliffe Ees.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AD 43-410</td>
<td>Roman Road from Manchester to Ribchester built close by.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1068</td>
<td>Land at Redclyffe gifted to Nicholas Fitzgilbert de Talbois</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1190</td>
<td>William de Radcliffe rebuilds St Mary’s church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1365</td>
<td>Richard de Radclyffe obtains a licence for a private oratory (chapel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1403</td>
<td>Licence to crenellate, i.e. fortify Radcliffe manor house is granted by King Henry IV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1410</td>
<td>James de Radcliffe dies and is buried in St Mary’s church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1415</td>
<td>Richard de Radclyffe fights at the Battle of Agincourt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1485</td>
<td>John de Radclyffe dies fighting for the future Henry VII at the Battle of Bosworth Field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1561</td>
<td>The Radcliffe estate is sold to the Assheton family.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1670</td>
<td>The site becomes a farmstead.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750s</td>
<td>The Bealey family begin a bleaching business north of the church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1765</td>
<td>By marriage the Radcliffe estate comes into the ownership of the Wilton family of Heaton Hall.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1811</td>
<td>Warth weir, serving Bealey’s goit, re-built.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1830’s</td>
<td>The Bealeys acquire the manor house site, demolish house and hall and build Tower Row and Church Row</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1837</td>
<td>Parish Church School built</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1839 - 1903</td>
<td>Bealey family build a Methodist Chapel ((1839), Infant School (1860), and Convalescent Hospital (1903)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011 &amp; 2013</td>
<td>Archaeological investigations of the Tower site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Heritage Lottery Fund award to excavate, enhance and interpret the Hall and Tower site.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014 and 2015</td>
<td>Further archaeological investigations of the Tower site</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glossary Word</td>
<td>Definition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aisle</td>
<td>a secondary space running alongside the nave of a church separated from it by columns, piers or posts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ashlar</td>
<td>cut stone, with a very smooth surface.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bee bole</td>
<td>an alcove in a wall for holding a woven bee hive (a skep).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brace</td>
<td>a straight or curved strengthening timber in a timber-framed wall or truss.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chamfer</td>
<td>surface formed by cutting off a square edge or corner.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chancel</td>
<td>the eastern end of a church housing the altar, which was usually set apart from the rest of the building.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goit</td>
<td>a man-made channel for carrying water from a river to a manufacturing site and back again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hengiform</td>
<td>an earthwork, often circular, which may contain ritual structures such as stone or timber circles.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nave</td>
<td>the body of a church west of the chancel or crossing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oratory</td>
<td>a private chapel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pele Tower</td>
<td>a small, robust tower, which local residents could barricade themselves inside of when raiders were in the area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plinth</td>
<td>Projecting courses at the foot of a wall or column.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sill</td>
<td>Horizontal member at the bottom of a window, door, or wall-frame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar Chamber</td>
<td>The private chamber of the Lord of the Manor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spere truss</td>
<td>truss at the end of a hall, dividing the cross entry from the hall proper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tie-beam</td>
<td>the main horizontal, transverse, timber which carries the feet of the principals at wall-plate level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trefoil</td>
<td>a window divided into three parts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Truss</td>
<td>a main structural component of a roof formed by a horizontal tie-beam and inclined principle rafters. All other elements of the roof are supported by the truss.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The Centre for Applied Archaeology would like to thank Bury Council and AGMA for commissioning the archaeological works at Radcliffe Tower and the HLF for funding a large part of the project and the current booklet. WREN provided funding for the restoration work on the tower and Historic England were very supportive throughout the project and particularly in providing consents to record the tower and excavate the hall site. Great thanks are owed to the Radcliffe Heritage Project Steering Group, chaired by Rob Trueblood, for their drive and enthusiasm. Thanks are also due to the group of historical researchers who helped with the Radcliffe Heritage Project, and whose work has greatly improved our knowledge and understanding of the site: these include Roger Ashby, Sue Boon, J T Dixon, Carol Kemp, Samantha Mayo, Peter North, Dave Stanley, Marlene Nolan, Beryl Patten and Margaret Wells. The excavations were led on behalf of the University of Salford by Vicky Nash, Sarah Cattell and the late and much-missed Brian Grimsditch, with the assistance of Mandy Stanton, Kirsty Whittall, Sarah-Jane Murphy and Adam Thompson. Over 300 volunteers took part in the excavations, with Sonia Allen, Helen Buskey, John Cross, Marija Currell, Robert Huddart, Carol Kemp and Ted Platt providing crucial assistance. The Friends of Close Park provided support and 10 local schools also helped in the excavation of the site. Support from Bury Council was given by Chris Wilkinson, Mick Nightingale and Michael Dunne. Members of Bury Archaeological Group greatly assisted with the excavations, especially Norman Tyson, whilst members of the parish of St Mary & St Bartholomew also provided invaluable research help, shelter and tea, with particular thanks to Rev Carol Hayden, Ian Madden and Barbara Greaves.

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A copy of the detailed excavation and building survey reports, together with the project archive and artefacts, has been deposited with Radcliffe Library

Other publications in the Greater Manchester’s Past Revealed series are available from the Greater Manchester Archaeological Advisory Service at the University of Salford, and several can be downloaded from www.oxfordarchaeology.com/greatermanchesterspastrevealed
Radcliffe Tower marks the historic centre of what was originally a Saxon Manor. After the Norman Conquest in 1066 it became the seat of a wealthy and powerful family, who took the name ‘de Redclyffe’ from the rocky banks of the River Irwell. The family built a succession of manor houses, a pele tower and a church. Today, the only visible remains are the church and ruined tower.

Local people have campaigned for many years for the site’s importance to be recognised and a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2013 facilitated a project to excavate, enhance and interpret Radcliffe’s medieval core. A heritage trail and website (www.radcliffeheritage.co.uk) sit alongside this booklet in documenting the project.